(c) and (d) It was decided to merge the National AIDS Control Board and the Technical Advisory Committee under a common management committee.

Visit of Prime Minister of Mauritius

*515. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL:
SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA:

With the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister of Mauritius visited India recently;

(b) if so, the various issues that were discussed and the outcome thereof;

(c) whether any agreements were reached between the two countries dunng the visit;

(d) if so, the salient features thereof;

(e) whether the visiting Prime Minister had offered to permit Indian businessmen to have trade links with Mauritius businessmen, and also have joint ventures with that country; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The discussions, which included a comprehensive review of bilateral relations between India and Mauritius, and issues of regional and international interest, were characterised by close understanding and an identity of views. The Pnme Minister of Mauritius expressed his understanding of India's concerns on the proposed comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He also reiterated his Government's support for India becoming a permanent member of a restructured UN Security Council. No formal agreements were signed during the visit. Keeping in view the privileged relationship between the two countries. Government has agreed to the request of the Government of Mauritius for an additional flight of Air Mauritius between Mauritius and Delhi on the same terms and conditions as the current flights operating between Mauritius and Bombay.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. The Prime Minister of Mauritius called for increased Indian investment and cooperation in the technological upgradation of the sugar and textiles industries of Mauritius and the development of the tourism sector. He also invited Indian industrial enterprises to participate on a Build-Operate-Transfer basis in infrastructure development projects in Mauritius.

Influx of Refugees from Sri Lanka

*516 SHRI B.L. SHARMA PREM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the heavy thrust, by the Lankan forces against the Tamil Militants, have resulted in large scale influx of refugees from Sri Lanka to India during the recent months;

(b) if so, the estimated number of the migrants since Jan. 1, 1996 and till date:

(c) whether diplomatic pressures are being exerted on the Government of Sri Lanka for controlling the situation; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and its outcome and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) The Government have received reports of some persons affected by the situation in Sri Lanka having come to India during the last month. According to reports received, the groups of people who came to India in August 1996 are mainly from Pesalai and Mannar areas who were affected by food shortages, and other causes including fear of possible clashes between LTTE and security forces in these areas. The recent thrust by Sri Lankan security forces has been in the Kilinochchi region which is quite distant from Mannar/Pesalai.

(b) As per information received from the State Government of Tamilnadu, since 1.1.96 a total of 988 Sri Lankan refugees have come so far to India.

(c) and (d) Government have conveyed their concern at this development to the Sri Lankan authorities, who have assured that measures have been taken to control the situation. These include steps to ensure adequate food supplies and relief activities and presence of international relief agencies in the area.

Relations with Neighbouring Countries

*517. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the present Government had promised to strengthen the relations with all the neighbouring countries;

(b) if so, the steps that have been taken in this regard;

(c) whether the Prime Ministers of these countries had shown keen interest in improving the relations with India;

(d) if so, whether the Government had started fresh talks with all the countries; and

(e) if so, the details and the outcome thereof, country-wise?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (e) The present Government have given top priority to strengthening relations with all the

neighbouring countries. Political leadership in all the countries with the exception of Pakistan have also duly reciprocated in this regard. Besides the ongoing diplomatic and other steps, high level visits have been undertaken to provide further impetus. Details are as under:

Nepal

Commerce Secretary visited Kathmandu in July. 50% material and labour content requirement has been removed for duty free imports of products of Nepalese manufacture into India. The High Level Task Force met in New Delhi on 09 August which reviewed and expressed happiness over the good progress registered in implementation of Indian aid projects in Nepal. Nepalese Foreign Minister, Dr. Lohani visited Delhi during 12-14 August when all aspects of bilateral relations were discussed in a warm and friendly atmosphere which characterize the close and cordial relations between the two countries.

Bhutan

EAM visited Bhutan during 10-12 August and a Bhutanese delegation led by their Planning Minister visited New Delhi from 26 August-2 September when all aspects of bilateral relations were reviewed and a new direction for economic cooperation during next five years has been outlined.

Bangladesh

Foreign Secretaries from both countries have exchanged visits. External Affairs Minister is visiting Dhaka during 6-9 September. All pending issues are under discussion, including the water sharing and repatriation of Chakma refugee issues.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister visited New Delhi in June and relations with that country are progressing well.

Pakistan

Despite the initial positive message of felicitation from Prime Minister of Pakistan, she has not responded to our Prime Minister's reply in which resumption of Foreign Secretary level talks for wide ranging and comprehensive dialogue had been proposed. However, Government have taken several unilateral steps to promote greater interaction and people to people contacts with Pakistan.

Emission Norms

*518. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a whether the automobile manufacturers in the country on their own request, were granted in 1993 three years relaxation period, so that they could develop the required technology to adhere to the emission norms;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the said three years exemption period has since expired;

(d) whether the automobile manufacturers have since complied with the emission norms; and

(e) if not, the action proposed to be taken against them for not complying with the same?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (e) The indicative emission norms for different categories of vehicles to be effective from 1.4.1996 were notified on 15.9.1993. Certain amendments were proposed to make the norms more strict and a draft of the amendments was notified on 5.6.1995 and subsequently the final notification was issued on 29.3.1996 to make the new emission norms effective from 1.4.1996. Every motor vehicle manufactured after 1.4.1996 has to comply with the new emission standards. No vehicle can be registered if it is not meeting these emission norms. No relaxation has been given by this Ministry in this regard.

Productivity-Linked Reward to Port Employees

*519 SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a new scheme to provide productivity-linked reward scheme for the port and dock employees was pending with the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the steps taken to approve that scheme;

(d) the details of the benefits likely to be given to the port and dock employees under the scheme; and

(e) whether it is applicable to all major and minor ports?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (d) A new Productivity Linked Reward (P.L.R) Scheme covering all the officers, employees and workers in the major Port Trusts and Dock Labour Boards for a period of 3 years from the year 1994-95 has since been approved by the Government. The salary/wage ceiling for eligibility for payment of P.L.R. has been removed in this scheme. Payment of P.L.R. at the rates of 18.94% and 19.6% of the annual salary/wage (assuming salary/wage as Rs. 2500 p.m. for calculation where it exceeds Rs. 2500 p.m.) for the accounting years 1994-95 and 1995-96 respectively has been allowed.